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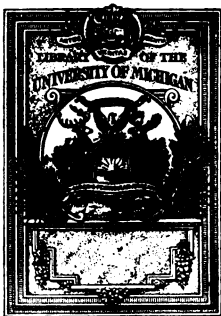
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828

T113

The RUBÁIYÁT
of the
COMMUTER

*Being Quatrains Concerning
the Affairs of Everyday*

By
Harry Persons Taber



JOHN BRIDGES
Briarcliff Manor, New York
1905

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JOHN BRIDGES



The Briarcliff Print Shop
Briarcliff Manor, N. Y.

To
WILLIAM ELLIOTT LOWES
of
Baltimore City, Maryland

Oh, Bad Bill Lowes ! Your win-
ning ways
And arguments are so astute,
They *Pay* you just to spend your
days
Inducing People to Commute

138484

The RUBÁIYÁT *of*
the COMMUTER

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The RUBÁIYÁT *of*
the COMMUTER

I

Wake! for the sun has riz and
put to flight
The broken dreams I had all
through the night.—
Drive me along with them; the
hall clock strikes
And through my window comes a
shaft of Light.

II

Before the Dreams of Early
Morning died,
Methought a Voice out in the
Hallway cried,
"Say! All the Breakfast is pre-
pared below,"
And, "Will you have your eggs
boiled, poached or fried?"

III

I waste an Hour daily---(I Com-
mute)---
In This and That Endeavor and
Pursuit
Of trains that run off schedule---
I must run
Ere I shall hear the engine toot-
toot-toot.

IV

You know, my Friends, with what
a brave Carouse
We put a Second Mortgage on
our house.
We bought the Lot on the In-
stallment Plan
And thought to install Chickens,
Pigs and Cows.

V

Ah, the advertisements of Dingly
Dell
Robbed me of all my hard-earned
savings---well,
I often wonder what Land
Agents buy
One half so easy as the folks they
sell.

VI

But as the Poet saith, "What's in
a Name?"
We'd thought on Chickens, Pigs
and Cows the same
As all Commuters think on.
We forgot
To think on Twins---till Jim and
Bessie came.

VII

'T was ever thus, from Childhood's
Happy Day
Our Fondest Hopes just Call and
Go Away.
They speak of Things which
we desire to have ;
They speak of Twins---It's all
right, anyway.

VIII

Commuting Life is all a happy
one,
If One Extracts from Everyday the
Fun.
But if the Joy of Living you
can't see,
Then don't Commute---'t were
better not begun.

IX

But if perchance, you know the
 Joy it brings
 To make the best of sorry Schemes
 of Things,
 Perhaps you'll know that Truth
 is written here ;
 Perhaps you'll listen while the
 Singer sings.

X

And as the Corkscrew, drawing
 out the Cork,
 I pull myself together for my
 Work.
 I know I have but little time to
 waste
 If I would catch the 8.10 for New
 York.

XI

Ah, but by Commutation, people
 say,
 The Road will make a Better
 Reckoning. Nay
 'Tis only making like a Calendar
 A Ticket to be punched from day
 to day.

XII

For Some there be who never yet
have been
On the 8.10, but take the 8.16,
Because it's called "The Flyer."
That's because
It doesn't fly---at least that I have
seen.

XIII

The Gentle Milkman comes. He
says, "I Swow I
Some Cuss has come and stole my
Jersey Cow."
He fills our Cup with Un-
familiar Milk---
The best that he can do for us
just now.

XIV

The Blessed Furnace doth harass
my Soul.
It's pretty tough to have to pay the
toll
Charged by the Merry Dealer.
He has bribed
My Furnace just to sit and Eat up
Coal.

XV

The Iceman, too, is such a Happy
 chap ;
 He sees Drusilla, hanging Clothes,
 mayhap ;
 He kisses her behind the Garden
 Fence
 And then shouts loudly, " What !
 No Ice ! Gid ap ! "

XVI

And I remember once I sought
 to go
 To see The Baker thumping his
 moist dough.
 Methought he did the doughy
 Doughnut make.
 " Oh, Mister Baker, do not Dough-
 nuts so ! "

XVII

Three times a week I eagerly fre-
 quent
 The Barber Shop and hear Much
 Argument.
 And when the Able Barber
 hollers " Next ! "
 I have Far Fewer Fur than when
 I went.

XVIII

We have a dog who's such a
Hungry Pup,
He thinks it's always Time to Dine
or Sup.

He sees some Chickens in My
Neighbor's Yard
And then romps gaily out and
Eats them Up.

XIX

We have a harmless, necessary
Cat,
To catch our Mouse and predatory
Rat.

We grieve to say that every little
While
She catches Kittens or some
Things like that.

XX

I vowed last Spring---in fact I
made a bet---
That I'd raise Chickens, and I'll
do it yet.

I've argued calmly with my
Plymouth Rocks,
But not a single one of them will
Set.

XXI

Why, be this Bird a Plymouth
 Rock? Who dare,
 With twisted neck, the Fowl for
 Food prepare.

A Rooster? We should keep
 him should we not?
 And if a Hen---why, then, let's
 set her, there!

XXII

I'm Eggless, quite, through all the
 Summer Days.

I've not a Hen that in the Hen
 House stays;

For all of them are migratory
 Birds,

And every one out in the Bushes
 lays.

XXIII

A Book on Gardening and a Pat-
 ent Plow,

A patient Horse, some Chickens
 and a Cow,

Some Lettuce springing in the
 Garden patch;

Oh, Lonesomehurst were Paradise
 enow!

XXIV

Much seed upon my Garden did I
sow,
And with mine own hand wrought
to make it grow.
And this was all the Harvest
that I Reaped :
Some small potatoes and a broken
hoe.

XXV

I said to Peter Henderson, " I
need
A peck or two of your best Gar-
den Seed."
I waited patiently to see things
grow,
But all I saw was Weed and
Weed and Weed.

XXVI

And I have thought that I would
like to go
To Edward Markham, saying, " Is
it so,
You know a Man who can my
Garden Weed ?
Just call for him, and let him
bring his hoe."

XXVII

The grass no question makes of
 eyes or noes,
But strong and high with fearful
 quickness grows.
 And he that goes perspiring o'er
 the lawn
He sadly mows it all---he mows---
 he mows.

XXVIII

And when, like all Commuters, I
 must pass
With clicking Mower mowing up
 the grass,
 I feel as though a Highball
 would taste good,
And so I go and fill an Empty
 Glass.

XXIX

And this artistic chair of rustic
 make
On which unthinkingly a seat we
 take ;
 Ah, lean upon it lightly, for
 who knows
How soon its weak and wobbly
 legs may break !

XXX

Our Horse no Reason takes of
Reins or Whoas,
But right or left as strikes his
Fancy goes.

Sometimes I think he thinks he
knows it all,
And if he thinks he knows, he
knows he knows.

XXXI

My Wife said to the Cook the
other Day,
"I wish you wouldn't cook those
things that way!"

The Cook flared up and threat-
ened she would leave.
I knelt beside her, praying her to
stay.

XXXII

Each Morn a thousand Troubles
brings, you say;
Yes, but where leaves the Cook
of yesterday?

And this first Summer month
that brings the Guests
Shall take the Cook and Waitress
both away.

XXXIII

And then Spring Cleaning comes---
and when it hath
It stays: Nor all your Piety nor
wrath
Can stop it when it kalsomines
the hall,
Nor all your Swears arrest its fear-
ful path.

XXXIV

And you must go---with weary,
lagging feet
For Water, from the Well across
the street.
And, Lo, the neighbor from
another block
Has reached the well before you---
oh, be fleet!

XXXV

And that inverted tub upon the
floor
Was put there just for you to
stumble. O'er.---
Vent not your spleen on it, for
it receives
As many bumps as you do may-
be more.

XXXVI

Indeed, indeed, on every first of
 May
 I took down stoves and put the
 pipes away.
 And then---and then came
 Spring, and like as not
 'T would be a raw and blustering
 rainy day.

XXXVII

Perplexed with Human and Divine
 decree
 "Tomorrow," says my loving wife
 to me,
 "Don't lose your temper, but
 we really must
 Invite the Baptist minister to tea."

XXXVIII

Up from the Station, breathless to
 my gate
 I ran, and at the supper-table
 sate.
 Oh, many a sin my loving wife
 forgives,
 But not the Master-Sin of being
 Late!

XXXIX

At Evening when I'm through
with daily Strife,
I read aloud from Wagner's "Simple Lief",
Or Schopenhauer, or Dooley
or George Ade,
Or "Letters of a Home made
Husband to his Wife."

XL

Ah, my Beloved, fill the Lamp
that casts
Light on our Morris chairs and
plaster casts.
Tomorrow---why tomorrow I
must be
Up with the alarm Clock's seven
thousand blasts.

XLI

Would you your substance riotously
spend?
Then to a Rummage Sale go with
me, friend.
Or Food Sale, or the Shake-
speare Study Club,
For on these doth our social life
depend.

XLII

I sent my Soul the Village main
 street through
 Some letters of its social life to
 view ;
 And by and by my Soul re-
 turned and said :
 "Y. M. C. A. and W. C. T. U."

XLIII

'T was my intent to take a good
 night's Rest.
 I sought my Room and got myself
 undressed.
 The Twins woke up and both
 began to yell,
 So I sat up, because they liked it
 best.

XLIV

One Baby's lips are lockt ; but I
 divine
 High-Piping Bessie with infantile
 whine
 Call out for quantities of Malted
 Milk.
 Ah, never were such hungry babes
 as Mine.

XLV

I heat their Cup upon the Chafing
Dish,
Where just last Night I cooked some
a-la Fish.

I fill their Bottle, and I give it
them ;
And thus they realize their dearest
Wish.

XLVI

I sometimes think it would be
something grand
To dwell like Babies in some
pleasant Land,

Where when you want a Thing
you yell for it,
And there you find it, ready to
your hand.

XLVII

A Man downtown once asked me
if I could
Sit in a little Game. I said I
would.

I scorned to tell my Wife a
simple lie,
But, then, I told her Something
Just as Good.

XLVIII

For when She asked me if I won
that night,
I said, "My Darling Girl, you
wrong me, quite!
My Friend was sick, and I sat
up with him."
(I won his stacks, and he was
sick, all right.)

XLIX

My wife and I went picnicing
last Spring
At Coney, where the Vaudevillains
sing.
A Fairy in a Shirtwaist winked
at me.
My Wife said, "My! But she's
the Sassy Thing!"

L

I went one Day and bought a little
Block
Of New York Middle Cumulative
Stock.
It didn't cumulate, and so I had
To put my Ring and Watch and
Pin in Hock.

L1

I went one time and made a little
 Play,
 But all the Ponies came in last
 that day.
 I asked the Jockeys what detained
 them, but
 "Go chase Yourself!" was all
 that they would say.

LII

My daughter Mary's weeping bitter
 tears.
 The Beau she had through all the
 last Two Years
 Forgot to come a week ago last
 Night,
 And she was filled with seven
 thousand Skeers.

LIII

But I knew well the Reason why
 he'd not
 Showed up that Night. The
 Game was pretty hot.
 I played him Poker down there
 at the Club,
 And Mary's Beau won every
 blessed pot.

LIV

My lovely Wife is always filled
 with Fear.
 She wakes and says, "I hear a
 Burglar, Dear!"
 So in my Nightie I go sleuthing
 out,
 But I don't find a Burglar. Ain't
 she queer?

LV

A young Book Agent came around
 one day
 Who had a most insinuating way.
 I bought her book and paid a
 dollar cash.
 A dollar was n't very much to
 pay.

LVI

But afterward my heart with Fear
 was rife.
 I hardly dared go home and tell
 my Wife
 How I'd by Contract bound
 myself to pay
 That girl a dollar weekly through
 my life.

LVII

Jones Yesterday Much Madness
 did prepare
 For his Good Wife. He loaded
 up for fair.
 Drank till he knew not whence
 he came nor why---
 Drank till he knew not when he
 went nor where.

LVIII

He found the Door to which he
 had the Key.
 It wa'nt so dark, but still he
 couldn't see
 The Migratory Keyhole in the
 Door,
 And so he raised his Voice and
 yelled for me.

LIX

Jones has a kid who 's always in a
 muss.
 His chief delight is stirring up a
 fuss.
 And then with Thumb to Nose
 he jeers at me ;
 If he was mine, I'd lick the little
 Cuss.

LX

Then, without asking, Johnny
hurried hence.

I, without asking, helped him o'er
the Fence.

Oh, many a Cub like that
Confounded Boy
Hath that same quality of inso-
lence.

LXI

I sometimes think that never blows
so hard

The wind as scoots across our
bleak front Yard.

And every hurricane the season
sends

Our shaky little Cottage doth
bombard.

LXII

From that inverted Bowl they call
the Sky

The Snow falls down in Blizzards.
Then 't is I

Who has to hustle out and
shovel it.

But, never mind, the Spring will
come Bimeby.

LXIII

And then my Wife says, every
 week or so,
 " Today I think I will a-shopping
 go."

And I the silken tassel of my
 Purse
 Tear, and its Treasure to the Lady
 throw.

LXIV

Then fares she forth to town with
 merry smiles
 And buys her Summer dresses in
 new styles,
 And many strange and wondrous
 furbelows
 She buys, persuaded by the shop-
 man's wiles.

LXV

Some for the Glories of this
 Style ; and some
 Sigh for the Fashions Prophesied
 to come.

Ah, pay the cash and let the
 credit stand,
 Nor heed the Grumble in your
 distant home.

LXVI

And when her final dollar is
disburs'd
And she has stretched her credit
all she durst,
She hurries to the station breath-
lessly,
And catches the last train to
Lonesomehurst.

LXVII

And fear not lest Extravagance
close your
Account and Mine. She'll do
the same some more.
Th' Eternal Feminine can al-
ways spend
Much time and gold in a Depart-
ment Store.

LXVIII

I sometimes think that nowhere,
ever blows
Such flowers as my daughter
paints! The Rose
Or Hyacinth upon a porcelain
tile
Extraordinary talent plainly shows.

LXIX

As then the Tulip on a shiny
placque
Or oaken panel, coated with
shellac ;
Pink Morning-Glories on a
bannerette,
Or Calla lilies on a Ground of
Black.

LXX

My daughter's very clever for her
age,
She reads the Hints found on the
Woman's Page.
And, oh, the lovely things that
she can do,
It makes my Neighbor's daughter
fairly rage !

LXXI

Why, out of my last Summer's
old Straw Hat,
She made a nice Work Basket !
Think of That !
And from the Strings that round
the Parcels come,
She'll knit a Very Dainty Table
Mat.

LXXII

Or, Half a Dozen old Tin Cans
 she'll get,
 And make a Real Artistic Tab-
 ourette ;
 And on the Parlor Wall, she's
 gone and draped
 A most distressing ragged old Fish
 Net.

LXXIII

She says that it has Feeling. I
 don't know
 Just what that means. But still it
 must be so,
 For she's 'way up on Art. I
 tell you what !
 My Grown-Up Daughter isn't
 very Slow.

LXXIV

And lately to my Front Door
 blithely came
 An Agent ; and he seemed to
 know my Name.
 He wanted to make Crayon
 Portraits,---free---
 Alas, he caught me with his Little
 Game.

LXXV

He said my picture would be just
 Immense,
 And for it, I would be at no ex-
 pense.

I wasn't, But he made me buy
 a frame,
 Which cost eleven dollars, fifty
 cents!

LXXVI

And if that agent of the dark
 moustache,
 Comes 'round again, with his
 Old Crayon Trash,

I'll have some business with
 him, and I think
 That after that he won't be quite
 so brash.

LXXVII

You know, My Friend, sometimes
 I homeward fare
 And find the Sewing Circle gath-
 ered there,

The gilt-edged china is set out
 for tea,
 And all the house assumes a festive
 air.

LXXVIII

The Revelations of Devout and
Learn'd
Were not the Tales for which
their fair ears burned.
But why the Widow Smithers
sold her house,
And how much wages Jennie Bof-
fin earned.

LXXIX

"What! without butter make a
good puff paste!"
And, "Without trimming, make a
blue silk waist!"
O'er many a cup of weak and
vapid Tea
These subjects are discussed in
eager haste.

LXXX

I sometimes think that never look
so fine
Small children, as when they by
chance, are mine.
And every boy or girl my
neighbors have,
Are imps of mischief, prone to
fret and whine.

LXXXI

I went one day to call on neighbor
Shaw.

(His kid is just the worst I ever
saw)

The father said, "Come Johnny,
speak your piece,"

He bawled, and said, "I needn't
Need I Maw?"

LXXXII

I wish he wouldn't. Why should
I hear, pray,

About the Hesperus, or One-
Hoss Shay?

Or why the Curfew rang, Or
what occurred

When Sheridan was twenty miles
away!

LXXXIII

But when *my* children stand up to
recite,

That is of course a different mat-
ter, quite.

You should hear Jim's "Hora-
tius at the Bridge!"

I tell you *he's* a Paragon, all
right!

LXXXIV

Would you some dollars well and
wisely spend ?
Then get a Camera, I tell you,
Friend,
You can can make lovely pic-
tures of your folks ;
It is a hobby I would recom-
mend.

LXXXV

Why, yesterday I took a family
Group,
Mother and Children posed on
our Front stoop,
All holding hands. It was a
lovely sight !
And in the distance showed the
Chicken Coop.

LXXXVI

Strange, is it not that of Com-
muters who
Before me passed the train-shed
portal through ;
Not one but carried sundry
packages,
Which is the way I have to travel
too.

LXXXVII

For I remember stopping by the
way,
To get the things my wife wants
every day.
And laden down with Bundles
great and small
I catch a train as Early as I
may.

LXXXVIII

Each morn a thousand errands
brings, you say.
Yes, but I left some undone yester-
day.
My wife said, "Coffee, Tea, Can-
ned Soup and Soap"
But I forgot the Coffee any-
way.

LXXXIX

And this I know : that, take it all
around,
The lovely cottages that may be
found
In backs of magazines for mod-
est sums,
Look very different when they're
on the ground.

XC

The Shingle Roof I set my heart
upon,
Turns out to be but Tiling, And
Anon
The Chimneys vanish from the
Contract And
I find no traces of the Octa-
gon.

XCI

Of course, I haven't all the things
I want,
Some fruit-trees and some grape-
vines I must plant.
I'd like some Hollyhocks, but
My Wife says
They're too old-fashioned, so, of
course we can't.

XCII

I want to get an Iron Dog for the
lawn,
And I would like to have a stucco
Fawn.
I think they're so Poetic seen
against
The evening Sunset or the Morn-
ing Dawn.

XCIII

We have a Music Box that sweet-
ly plays
"The Babbie Waltzes" and "The
Marseillaise."
It plays a tune called "Hiawa-
tha" too,—
They tell me that's the very latest
Craze.

XCIV

And after all its pieces have been
played,
We pass around some cake and
lemonade.
And when the Guests take leave,
they smile and say:
"We really hope we have n't
overstayed."

XCV

When I Commute, I always try
to strike
Conductors, yes, and Trainmen
that I like,
So when I take the early morn-
ing train
I hear their cheerful greeting,
"Howdy, Mike!"

XCVI

The Bootblack, with his eager
 Brush and Gloss,
 Would from our boots remove the
 Mud and Moss,---
 Approaches us in Ferry Cabins,
 then
 Salutes us with insistent, " Polish,
 Boss ? "

XCVII

Each day do I observe the
 Scenery
 And all the Springtime's rustic
 greenery :---
 The painted Signs of Some-
 one's Near-to-Milk,
 Or Barron's restless Rustless
 Screenery.

XCVIII

At Night the Fierce Commuter
 through the Car
 Romps gaily, asking where the
 Players are,
 To play at something which he
 thinks is Whist.
 I'm glad I don't Commute to
 where it's Far !

XCIX

The Newsboy, that enthusiastic
Wight,
Comes crying through the 5.18
each night,---
Calls out the Names of foolish
Magazines,
But not one name of stories that I
write.

C

Back in the Book of Genesis, they
say
The Evening and the Morning
were one Day.
To me the Evening, Afternoon
and Night
All help to make a Passing Merry
Play.

CI

But, after all, there isn't any
Fear;
For when, unto the gateway
drawing near,
I know I'll find My Girl with out-
stretched arms,
To greet me with a happy,
"Hello, Dear!"

BOBAB.

